

Federal Legislation Update

August 13, 1999

GLICKMAN ANNOUNCES SUMMIT, ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 9, 1999: In remarks today to the national anti-hunger organization Share Our Strength, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman unveiled a detailed plan of action for the USDA Community Food Security Initiative, including the announcement of the first-ever National CFS Summit, and the naming of CFS Liaisons in all 50 states.

The Initiative, launched in February, seeks to cut domestic hunger in half by the year 2015 through USDA partnerships with states, municipalities, nonprofit groups, and the private sector that strengthen local food systems.

"I want people to see this summit as a way to make government involvement in fighting hunger more effective through cooperative efforts with communities," Glickman said. "Just because government isn't the only answer doesn't mean government is not an important part of the solution. It most certainly is. I want to see communities become more adept at utilizing governments vast resources and extensive programs to further food security goals."

The National Summit on Community Food Security: Building Partnerships to End Hunger, will be held on October 15 in conjunction with the World Food Day observance, will take place at central site in Chicago, and will be broadcast by satellite to downlink sites around the country. The Summit will both highlight existing best practices already working to bolster food security, as well as mobilize new commitments to fight hunger from all sectors of society.

"Together, we can conquer hunger in America," Glickman said. "And with a Community Food Security Liaison--a USDA employee in each state, we will be there to help you."

Glickman said that the new Community Food Security Liaisons will provide "one-stop-shopping" for nonprofit groups and citizens who need to utilize USDA resources to bolster local food security efforts.

The Community Food Security Action Plan has as its primary goals: catalyzing the creation of new and expanding the capacity of existing local infrastructures; increasing economic and job security; strengthening the federal nutrition assistance safety net; improving community food production and marketing; bolstering supplemental food provided by nonprofit groups; boosting education and awareness; and improving research, monitoring, and evaluation.

Earlier today, USDA's Risk Management Agency announced new guidelines to encourage farmers covered under federal crop insurance programs to glean and donate to charitable organizations field crops that would otherwise go unused or be destroyed.

State Legislation Update

THE PERFORMANCE OF CALIFORNIA CHILDREN ON STANDARDIZED NATIONAL TESTS

In Spring of 1998, more than half of the 4.4 million California school children scored below the 50th national percentile for their grade level when tested for basic academic skills.¹ In California, approximately 47% of California's student population are low-income. And generally, low-income children score lower on standardized tests than higher income children.

Low-income children have more health and nutritional problems that can affect a child's performance in school and child nutrition programs can mediate nutritional problems in low-income children and help them have peak performance in school.

1 California Department of Education website, Education in California, Looking through the Prism. (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/California.html>)

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ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS CREATED

The topic of low-performing schools has reached a new level of interest in the Assembly as Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa (D-Los Angeles) announced the creation of a Select Committee on Low-Performing Schools.

Assembly Member Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) will chair the Committee. Assembly Member Steinberg was elected to the Assembly last year and is a member of the Appropriations Committee, Health Committee, and Judiciary Committee. He is also the Chair of the Labor and Employment Committee.

The Select Committee will be co-chaired by Assembly Member Audie Bock (G-Oakland). She is the first person to have been elected to the state legislature under the Green Party. Other committee members have not yet been announced by the Speaker.

According to Chairperson Steinberg's office, the Select Committee will hold hearings on the following dates:

September 23rd
October 25th
November 17th
December 8th

The October 25th hearing will be held in Sacramento. Although specific locations have not been determined for the remaining dates, Steinberg's staff indicated that they would like to hold the additional hearings in the cities of Fresno, Los Angeles, and Oakland.

The tentative format of the hearings will be an interactive round of discussions concerning various school interests on topics related to low-performing schools. Teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders, education advocates, principals, staff, and students will be involved in one or more of the interactive discussions.

Among the topics that are anticipated to be included in these discussions are the provisions of AB 961, which was introduced by Assembly Member Steinberg earlier this year. As currently drafted, AB 961 would establish the Challenged-Schools Teacher Attraction and Retention Program (C-STAR). The C-STAR Program would provide funding to schools with the highest percentage of students from low-income families and other predictors of low student performance, such as the lack of fully qualified teachers or high rates of pupil mobility. To qualify for the funds, schools would meet specified requirements, including:

- Each classroom teacher at the school shall be fully credentialed in the subject or subjects that they are teaching.
- The school facility shall be clean, operational, safe and educationally conducive.
- Each pupil shall have textbooks and other instructional materials aligned to core academic standards and appropriate technology consistent with the academic plan of the school.
- Academic progress of each pupil towards core content areas shall be measured by statistically reliable and valid testing instruments annually.
- Academic achievement goals of the school must be at least the minimum targets established in SB 1X.

Schools would receive an amount equivalent to 2% of the base annual salary of all full-time equivalent classroom teachers in the school. Funds would only be used to attract and retain fully qualified, trained teachers and maintain a stable and experienced staff.

AB 961 was held in the Senate Education Committee in mid-July and has been made a two-year bill.

In addition to AB 961, Assembly Member Steinberg carried AB 1114 (Chapter 52, Statutes of 1999), which also addresses the subject of low-performing schools. AB 1114, which was one of the 1999-2000 budget trailer bills signed into law this year, establishes a program to provide salary bonuses to certificated staff in low-performing schools where pupil performance exceeds growth targets. Under AB 1114, the State Board of Education establishes criteria for determining the amount allocated to these schools. The amount may not exceed a one-time allocation of \$25,000.

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